

Reflections on July 2010 Internship Field-based Activities

As a practicing Director of Technology in La Vernia ISD, my Internship activities are naturally somewhat different from those of the typical student. After discussing the best course of action with Dr. Abernathy, we agreed that under the guidance of my Mentor, LVISD Superintendent Dr. Tom Harvey, I would pick tasks that I perform as a part of my duties, but examine them with a critical eye towards which ISTE Technology Facilitator (TF) Standards and Performance Indicator they address. Additionally, two separate, special technology tasks are designated as Internship Projects.

My July Internship Field-based Activities consisted of meeting with vendors regarding our ongoing Server Virtualization and Cloud Computing projects, spending time on my primary Internship project, the Special Education Virtualization/Virtual Desktop Project, and attending training on our new Aware Student Data Analysis software and our new online grade book, txConnect. Significant effort will continue to be expended throughout my primary Internship project, the Special Education Virtualization/Virtual Desktop Project; this effort is essential to the success of the project. Pitler, Hubbell, Kuhn and Malenoski (2007) note that “People attribute success to different sources; to their own innate abilities, to the assistance of others, to luck, and to effort. Of these possible attributions, the fourth, *effort*, is the wisest choice for someone who intends to achieve success or maintain it, as it is the only one within an individual’s control” (p. 155).

All these projects, and in particular the Special Ed Virtualization/Virtual Desktop Project, embody multiple Performance Indicators under Standard TF-II, which I meet by planning, designing, and modeling effective learning environments and experiences supported by technology. Williamson and Redish (2009) point out that “When implementing TF/TL Standard

II: Planning and Designing Learning Environments and Experiences, technology facilitators and leaders help teachers understand and implement Student-Centered Learning, an important and essential condition for achieving ISTE's NETS-S. In helping teachers shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, technology facilitators and leaders assume the role of professional learning coaches..." (p. 45).

This month I attended training on our new online grade book, txGradebook, a part of the txConnect suite. We are changing over from GradeSpeed, our previous online grade book, so I must learn the system now in order to train my teachers how to use it during our upcoming August inservices. This training helped me meet performance Standard TF-VII.C which I meet by participating in professional development opportunities related to the management of school facilities, technology resources, and technology purchases. It will be important for me to manage the process of change to accommodate the concerns of teachers during this transition.

While reflecting on the month's activities, I gained a deeper understanding of the import of asking colleagues for help; I hit several concerns and roadblocks when planning and designing my Internship Project that I had to discuss with my Mentor. The conversation was fruitful, as it always helps to get a fresh perspective and a fresh set of eyes examining an issue. Dana (2009) reminds us that "No one becomes the best he can be on his own" (p. 118).

This connects to my past learning as my Internship Project will lead to increased differentiation and new opportunities for engaging students with special needs. My future learning has been impacted by the need I have seen for new and innovative technologies to be deployed for special needs students, particularly if that technology allows them to access a consistent desktop and set of learning tools regardless of their location; I must discover new

approaches to providing technology tools, including adaptive and assistive technologies, to these students wherever/whenever in support of their instruction.

Viewing my performance on these tasks from an educator's point of view, I learned that I must be very careful implementing new technologies for special needs students; while these students stand to benefit most from the new technologies, these students do not tolerate change well, so I must tread lightly as I proceed through my Internship Project, especially when I begin the implementation phase. My performance during these tasks was impacted positively by the support and guidance of both my Mentor and our Special Education Director. Based on these activities, I will take a more thorough knowledge of the great potential benefit that technology offers to special needs students to future contexts, as well as a respect for the need these students exhibit for routine and predictability. As a learner, I gained new respect for the learning capabilities these children exhibit when using technology, capabilities that may be subdued or even non-existent under traditional teaching methods.

I was effective as a learner as I assimilated new information, and the views and concerns of others, into my project as it developed. I will transfer my learning to new situations by seeking input and collaboration from key stakeholders throughout every step of the design and implementation of a project.

As a lifelong learner, I must perform further research regarding best practices for implementing technology tools for special needs students; I am concerned that these students may need specialized technology tools or devices that I have not traditionally acquired or deployed in order to reach their potential as learners.

References:

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Dana, N. (2009). *Leading with Passion and Knowledge: The Principal as Action Researcher*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.